

# VEGA, Camas family expands to Vancouver

□ Grand Opening of VEGA North is Saturday

By Dan Trujillo  
Post-Record staff

The Vancouver Elite Gymnastics Academy is expanding to Vancouver, but Camas will always be home.

Once homeless, the group rented training space from two high schools before striking a partnership through Ernie Suggs, who at the time was the Community Education Director of the Camas School District. Suggs provided VEGA with a small training space in the Camas Armory.

Doors opened to the public on Aug. 30, 2004 with only a few coaches, 17 registered gymnasts and a dream of creating a positive, excellent and stable training environment. By 2005, registrations at VEGA vaulted

to 225. Every year, the number of gymnasts inclined. The rest is history.

"When we started VEGA, we were nomads," said owner Jaime Parra. "We rented space from Prairie High School and Battle Ground High School, or wherever we could get it. We didn't find a home until Camas Community Education opened its doors to us."

"By then, the VEGA name had already been established. They wanted us to change our name to CEGA," Parra recalled. "Now, we are back in Vancouver."

Proud of its history, the amount of children using the 5,500 square foot space in Camas has grown at a fast pace. VEGA serves more than 1,100 members in gymnastics, dance and Italian fencing, and provides music lessons for piano and guitar.

Parra kept a curious eye on Dave Hancock, an elite level and collegiate coach with Utah State University who purchased the Gold



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VEGA Camas and Big Air Gymnastics compete together for the first time. Coaches and kids see it as the beginning of something special.

Star Gymnastics facility in Vancouver. In November, Parra approached Hancock at his Big Air Gymnastics Center. Both of them had the same crazy idea.

"We have a beautiful facility at Camas, bursting at the seams. I called Dave with a terrific need of a larger facility with training pits," Parra said. "The more we talked, the more we realized our philosophies are similar. We believe in inspir-

ing kids to greatness and becoming champions."

Hancock is a coach at heart. He took over Gold Star Gymnastics because he wanted to keep the kids and parents involved, but had no idea how much time running a business would take away from coaching.

"As time went on, I was lessing touch with coaching and a lot of areas were suffering," Hancock said. "It was in that moment, I realized I needed to

be out there in the trenches. Working with kids is my passion."

With VEGA owners Jamie and Lana Parra and gymnastics director Zdravko Stoianov looking for opportunities to expand, a partnership with Hancock made sense.

"One of the greatest thrills for me is the combination of these two coaches," said Jamie Parra. "[Stoianov]

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